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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA'S NEW CABINET: HEALTH MINISTER ALOIS
STOEGER

11. (U) The following is a biographic profile of new
Minister for Health Affairs Alois Stoeger of the Social
Democratic Party (SPO).

Career

12. (U) A political newcomer, Stoeger came of age through
unions and in running the Upper Austria State Health
Insurance fund. His only prior political experience was on
the city council of Gallneukirchen (a village in Upper
Austria).

13. (U) Stoeger was born in 1961 in Allerheiligen, Upper
Austria. After high school, he began as apprentice with
the large steelmaker VOEST and worked later as a toolmaker
and lathe operator. Stoeger took adult education courses,
receiving a diploma from the Social Academy of the Austrian
Workers Chamber and a correspondence degree from the Marc
Bloch University Strasbourg for Social Practice.

14. (U) Stoeger rose through the union movement. In 1986
he became secretary of the union for mining energy and
metallurgy and worked almost 20 years there. In that role,
he was appointed to the boards of the Upper Austrian
(government) insurance companies for mining (1995) and
accidents (2002). In 2005, he was appointed head of the
Upper Austrian State Health Insurance Company (note: in
Austria it is not unusual for union representatives to hold
leading positions in public insurance funds).

Political/Economic Views

15. (SBU) Stoeger's Upper Austrian Health Insurance Company
is the only Austrian social insurance institution that has
not run deficits in the past three years, certainly a
factor in his nomination as minister. However, he was a
staunch opponent of the 2008 federal health reform plan and
is regarded as a defender of state interests against the
federal government. He opposes patient contributions to
medical treatment and pharmaceuticals and holds that
mandatory contributions by employers and employees should
still finance most healthcare outlays, despite huge
deficits in that system.

16. (SBU) We can expect Stoeger to fight pharmaceutical
companies over pricing, particularly for innovative
medicines. In early interviews as minister, he called for
rebates and price rollbacks from the pharma industry,
arguing that "price increases of 8% as in 2007 are not
possible when the economy is not growing." He reproached
drug makers for justifying price increases in terms of
research while they plough money into advertising and
public relations.

PERSONAL

17. (U) Stoeger is divorced and has one daughter. He enjoys hiking and jogging.

GIRARD-DICARLO